

Curriculum for “American Indian Printmakers” On exhibit October 1, 2010 - May 8, 2011

Teacher and Student - Fritz Scholder and T. C. Cannon



In the exhibit “American Indian Printmakers” the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum has drawn from more than 250 original prints from the Arthur and Shifra Silberman collection of American Indian art. Included are etchings, silkscreens, stone lithographs, and woodblocks by artists such as Earl Biss, Benjamin Buffalo, T. C. Cannon, Gray Cahoe, Woody Crumbo, Henry Fonseca, R. C. Gorman, Jean Lamarr, Kevin Red Star, Fritz Scholder, Jaune Quick-to-See and Jose Rey Toledo.

The prints in the exhibition date from the 1930s through the 1990s. The establishment of the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1962 gave the instructors and students an opportunity to step out of traditional “Indian” art and show the cultural changes of the American Indian. Many of the students and teachers brought printmaking into their professional life.

A Brief History

The first prints were created in China by Buddhists to circulate texts and images of religious ideas. During the 15-century the process migrated to Europe and printmaking began to flourish, again used to relate religious objects or book illustrations. Prints became an inexpensive way for people of all stations to own a picture of a favored saint and made possible the circulation of texts, maps and notifications.

Stone rubbings and relief or block prints were the first methods of printmaking utilized. Printmaking evolved through the years from block printing, engraving, etching, lithography, screen-printing to digital printing. Printmaking continues to be practiced as one of the fine arts.

Print is a generic term used to describe multiples of the same image. The term is used for both originals and reproductions. An original print is made by the artist, by hand, to create an original work of art, even though more than one copy is printed. In most original print processes, an artist does not draw or paint directly on paper, but produces an image on a hard surface. The image is transferred to a sheet of paper under pressure. Because of differences in ink, manipulation during printing, and changes an artist might make between impressions, each of the copies has subtle differences. There are several original print techniques, and each produces a unique result. With original prints, the ink has substance and can be detected on the surface of the paper.

A reproduction is a copy of an original painting or watercolor, and is created by photo-mechanical means, the same way an image in a magazine is made. For a traditional photo-mechanical reproduction, the artwork is photographed as a color transparency (CT). The resulting CT is separated into colors and each color is printed separately to build up the final image. This kind of reproduction can be recognized by its distinctive dot pattern that can be seen under magnification. A new process developed in 1990 called *giclée* (from the French *gicler*, to squirt or spray) comes out of the digital age. A digital image is taken of an artwork, downloaded to a computer, and printed on a high quality ink jet printer. Although there is no distinguishing

dot pattern, *giclée*, like any reproduction is characteristically flat, without the distinguishing texture of an original print. Every copy of a reproduction is identical to the first one printed.

Original Prints and American Indian Art

American Indian fine art underwent dramatic change in the twentieth century. Some artists who showed promise received training and encouragement at home and at some of the Indian schools. The first formal art programs for Indian artists are considered to be those established by Oscar B. Jacobson at the University of Oklahoma in 1926, and Dorothy Dunn at the Santa Fe Indian School in 1932. Although both Jacobson and Dunn have come under criticism for teaching rigidly defined flat styles, their importance lies in the advocacy and promotion of artistic styles based on indigenous design and imagery. Indian artists also came out of the art department established at Bacone College in Muskogee in 1935, as well as traditional art programs at other colleges and universities.

In addition to creating paintings and sculpture, American Indian artists such as Acee Blue Eagle, Woody Crumbo, Theodore Suina, and Juan Isidro Pino began experimenting with block prints and etchings in the 1930s. A generation later, with the founding of the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe in 1962, Indian students took instruction in printmaking along with their other studio classes – and such instruction continues today. Learning etching, lithography, serigraphy (silkscreen), and other original print media, some artists such as T.C. Cannon, Kevin Red Star, Earl Biss, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, like the earlier artists, went on to incorporate prints into their professional work.

Many artists such as Albert Durer, Francisco Goya, Pablo Picasso, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol used some form of print making as an extension of their art.



Indian with a Tomahawk
Lithograph on paper, 1975
Fritz Scholder

Fritz Scholder

Fritz Scholder (1937-2005) was born in Breckenridge, Minnesota and was a quarter Luiseño. At an early age he moved to South Dakota. He knew what he wanted to do in his life and having teachers such as Oscar Howe, a noted Sioux artist, helped him achieve his goals.

Scholder did not grow up as an Indian and his view of the Indian culture did not fit in with traditional “Indian” art. Between the 1960s and 1970s the culture of the American Indians changed as did Indian art. Scholder’s art was shocking to many viewers. His larger than life subjects, vivid colors and non-traditional painting almost classified him as a pop artist. With his distinctive style he became one of the most influential Indian artists of the 20th century.

Scholder taught at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico from 1964 to 1969. During his

tenure he taught an up and coming artist named T. C. Cannon. In 1972, after leaving IAIA, Scholder was approached by the Smithsonian American Art Museum to have a two person show. He chose T. C. Cannon, his former student, to exhibit with him. The show opened in Washington D.C. and traveled to a number of European countries including England.

In many ways Scholder was ahead of his time. During the 1980s, Scholder incorporated his childhood fascination with monsters, particular vampires, into his lithographic work like *The Uheamililiu*. Stark black and white, ominous and even threatening, these images resulted from Scholder's visit to Transylvania.

Fritz Scholder was a mover and a shaker in American Indian art and set the tone for innovation, creativity and independence for many of his students. His influence on generations of American Indian artists will be felt for years to come.

T. C. Cannon

T. C. Cannon (1946-1978) was born in Lawton, Oklahoma. He was raised in the traditions of his Kiowa father and his Caddo mother. His artistic talent became evident at an early age. He attended and graduated from Gracemont High School. While in high school he won numerous awards for his art works. Cannon would often carry a small note book with him to sketch or make notes of something to be used in a song or a poem.

Cannon was influenced by Stephen Mopope, one of the Kiowa Five, a group of Native American painters who achieved international fame after being supported by Oscar Jacobson of the University of Oklahoma. In 1964 Cannon joined the Institute of American Indian Arts of Santa Fe where studied under teacher and mentor Fritz Scholder. At this time Indian culture was changing and Cannon was part of the change. Although raised in Indian tradition, Cannon took his art in a non-traditional direction.

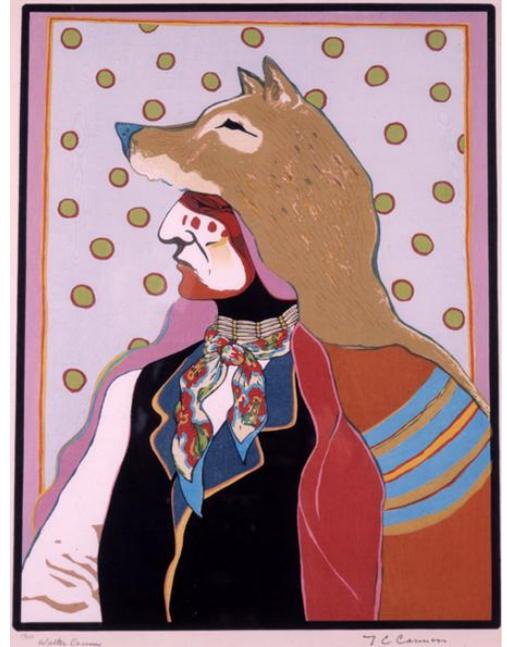
After graduating from IAIA Cannon enrolled in the San Francisco Art Institute but left to join the 101st Airborne Division and serve in Vietnam. His art breakthrough came, while still in Vietnam, when he was included in a major traveling exhibit from the Southern Plains Indian Museum in Anadarko, Oklahoma. In 1972 Cannon's career was enhanced further, when former teacher Fritz Scholder chose him to be in a two man show.

During his art studies, Cannon developed an affinity for printmaking. His etching *Southwest Landscape* is the kind of work pursued as a student at IAIA, but did not continue in his professional career, perhaps because color was always central to his art. More typical of the artwork that Cannon created as a professional is the lithograph *Waiting for the Bus (Anadarko Princess)*. It represents the kind of paradox that Cannon often presented, placing figures from his cultural past in present day settings, modern elements contrasting with traditional Plains Indian clothing. It is believed that this is the only lithograph that Cannon created.

A collaboration in the 1970s with wood-block-carver Kentaro Maeda and printer Matashiro Uchikawa introduced Cannon to that medium. He worked with the Japanese artists to produce a number of strong images including *His Hair Flows Like a River*, that focused on war and warriors, acknowledging those of the nineteenth century as well as his own military experience.

On May 8, 1978 T. C. Cannon was killed in an automobile accident in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is an artist that has continued to have a large influence on Native American art, both traditional and contemporary.

On October 1, 2010 “American Indian Printmakers” will open and the teacher Fritz Scholder and his prints *Indian With Tomahawk* and *The Uheamililiu* and the student T. C. Cannon, with *Southwest Landscape*, *Waiting for the Bus (Anadarko Princess)*, and *His Hair Flows Like A River* will again be in an exhibit together.



His Hair Flows Like a River
Woodcut on paper, 1978
T.C. Cannon

Activity Ideas

Art— Option 1: Students can experiment with different methods of printmaking. Research online on how to create relief prints with potatoes or use jello molds to print on fabrics. Purchase linoleum sheets at craft or art supply stores to create linoleum blocks. Have students create a unique silkscreen design on a tee shirt for a special event, activity or club.

Option 2: Differentiate between the different methods of printmaking: relief-woodcut and linoleum block; Intaglio-etching; planograph or lithograph; silkscreen or serigraphic. Distinguish between a print and a reproduction and open and limited editions.

Social Studies— Option 1: Make a map or timeline for printing techniques demonstrating how they migrated and evolved over time.

Option 2: Pick two artists from the exhibit and compare their styles. Or choose an artist from the 1960s or 1970s and a contemporary artist and contrast early printmaking styles with current trends. Did earlier artist’s style of artwork create cultural change for future American Indian artists? Explain.

Option 3: Research the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and explain why it was founded and what influence or impact it has had on America Indian art.

Language Arts— Create a dialogue with, or a story about the subject of *His Hair Flows Like A River*. Discuss why he is wearing his accoutrements. What do they represent to him? What does the wolf skin symbolize? Have students share their stories with each other.

Science— Option 1: Research and explain the chemical process involved in etching.

Option 2: Art work on paper requires special conservation and preservation efforts. Address how humidity, temperature, light, pollution and pests affect the stability of works on paper. What are ideal conditions to store this type of artwork?